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Being a freshie is (not) cool: stigma, capital and disgust in British Pakistani stereotypes of new subcontinental migrants

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ABSTRACT

Intra-ethnic discrimination, in the form of stereotyping of recent migrants by settled ethnic minorities, has been interpreted as internalized racism, displacing stigma and negotiation of local hierarchies of belonging. Stereotypes of ‘Fresh off the Boat’ migrants construct cultural boundaries and assertions of belonging, offering clues to processes of identity-making where ethnicity is complicated by ongoing migration. In British Pakistani portrayals of ‘freshies’, this assertion of difference coexists with familial ties and a high incidence of transnational marriage. Analysis of the figure of the ‘freshie’ in internet comedy videos, combined with qualitative research material, provides insight into dynamics of cultural and social capital, immigration and sexuality through manifestations of difference, similarity and disgust. Together these not only reveal the weakness of recent migrants’ positions in structures of socio-economic and symbolic power, but the blurring of social categories, and the continuing importance of transnational kinship in negotiations of identity amongst British Pakistanis.

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KEYWORDS British Pakistani; identity; boundary-making; intra-ethnic discrimination; migration; transnational marriage

Being a freshie’s cool (Mawaan Rizwan 2012¹)

CHORUS: All my life I’ve been a Freshie

My Mum and Dad are Freshie too

Join my gang of Freshies

It’s time to know – being a Freshie is cool

Fresh off the boat with a student visa

Work in a chicken shop on Green Lane

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Came to the country in a silk kurta
Exchanged that in for a chav's gold chain

In my car, a gold and red tissue box
Perving on young girls on the bus
They all run away
Why they run away?

Import, export, socks with flip flops
Hairy arms, hairy brow, curry house, sweet shop
Yes I am a bad man, rasta man, blood clot
Rollin' in my Honda blasting Indian hip hop – jaar

CHORUS

Giving wrong change in my corner shop
Charming the white girls with my swagger on lock
Side parting with the greasy top
Olive oil in my hair and popping them spots

Playing Jay Sean on my speaker phone
Keeping plastic on my remote control
Walking round town taking tourist photos
To show my village children London life back at home.
Cleaning my ears with my set of car keys
Picking my nose while I'm walking down the street
Wearing fake Armani
And yes I voted BNP – No way!

CHORUS

Being a Freshie is Cool (repeat to end)

Mawaan Rizwan's YouTube comedy music video 'Being a Freshie's Cool' pokes fun at the figure of the 'freshie': a (usually male) recent migrant from Pakistan. A distinctively British Asian take on an earlier YouTube sensation, 'Being a Dickhead is Cool',² the clip has had over 660,000 views on its main upload site alone. Rizwan, a Pakistan-born British director, actor and children's TV regular with a popular YouTube comedy channel, is not the only young British Asian comedian to parody the 'freshie'. Amongst the more polished of the numerous online skits, Humza Arshad, who found fame through his YouTube Channel (over 60 million views) and was recruited by police to help combat extremism in schools, also features a 'freshie' character in his

'Diary of a Badman' series.³ Having noted increasing use of this derogatory term to refer to Pakistani immigrants in the course of our longstanding ethnographic research, we were introduced to this genre of online parodies by Charsley's research participants. In this article, we take advantage of the elaboration of the 'freshie' stereotype in these representations, supplemented with material from our recent research, to offer an analysis of this manifestation of intra-ethnic boundary-making. Examination of the content of the 'freshie' stereotype underscores the importance of the particularity of migration contexts in interpreting specific cases of this widespread phenomenon.

Intra-ethnic discrimination, in the form of stereotyping by settled ethnic minorities of recent migrants from their (ancestral) homelands, is not unique to British Pakistanis. 'Fresh off the Boat', contracted to freshie or FOB, is a term found in a wide range of migration contexts. Interpretations have centred on internalized racism, displacing of stigma and attempts to negotiate local hierarchies of belonging. From a transnational perspective, such stereotypes can also be seen as responding to the continuities and ambivalences of cross-border social fields. Whilst these perspectives are valuable in explaining the *fact* of intra-ethnic boundary-making, stereotyping and discrimination, in this article we also demonstrate the utility of attention to the *form* (content and meaning) of such stereotypes. Bringing together perspectives on transnationalism, ethnic identities and boundary-making, with insights from the literature on class, capital and revulsion (Bourdieu 1986; Skeggs 2005; Tyler 2013), we demonstrate how close attention to portrayals of freshies allows an analytical unfolding of dynamics of cultural and social capital, immigration and sexuality through manifestations of difference, similarity and disgust. Together these not only reveal the weakness of recent migrants' position in structures of socio-economic and symbolic power, but the blurring of social categories, and the continuing importance of transnational kinship in negotiations of identity amongst British Pakistanis.

The figure of the freshie reveals the complexity of identity work in a context where ethnicity is complicated by ongoing migration and transnationalism. In this blurred terrain, the freshie figure represents an attempt at clarifying cultural boundaries and asserting belonging. The distancing by British Pakistanis from their subcontinental counterparts is lent a particular tension by the close familial ties which still exist between Britain and Pakistan, and by ongoing practices of transnational marriage which mean that 'freshies' may also, at least in theory, be potential marriage partners – indeed, those identified as looking or behaving like recent migrants may also be referred to as *mangetar* (or *mangy*) – a term meaning fiancé or, here, marriage migrant. Stereotypical characterizations designed to elicit disgust may form part of 'othering' discourses in a variety of contexts (e.g. Tyler 2013), but here the

prominence of sexual failure or deviance, and disgusting bodily practices must also be read both as a response to the meeting of already unstable categories (British/Pakistani) in marital unions and as part of young British Pakistanis' negotiations of desirable marriage practices.

Whilst other scholars have noted the use of the term, and sketched out its implications (Ahmad 2008; Qureshi et al. 2012), the media sources discussed here allow a much more detailed analysis of the stereotype. In exploring these depictions, we follow Tyler's 'figurative methodology' in which the term 'figure' is used 'to describe the ways in which at different historical and cultural moments specific "social types" become over determined and are publicly imagined (are figures) in excessive, distorted and caricatured ways' (2008, 18). Whilst Tyler traces the classed figure of the 'chav' across various media, here we examine the figure of the freshie as represented in internet comedy videos (focusing in particular on the work of Rizwan and Arshad), whilst drawing on contextual information from our qualitative research, including a recent ESRC-funded project.⁴ We use this approach to address both the more general question of motivations for intra-ethnic boundary-making, and the relationship between the content of the stereotype and the constellation of local and transnational socio-economic, political and cultural factors particular to this case.

The article opens by exploring the use of 'freshie' and cognate terms in various settings, before introducing the context of Pakistani migration to Britain. We consider processes of internalized racism, displacement of stigma and the blurring of boundaries in migration and transnational contexts, before drawing attention to issues of capital, sexuality and disgust as prominent characteristics of the freshie figure. These lead to our conclusions on the continuing importance of kinship and marriage for understanding processes of identity amongst British Pakistani.

'Fresh off the Boat': migrations and distantiatio

The category of 'Fresh off the Boat' migrants is most frequently encountered in accounts of Asian Americans (e.g. Pyke and Dang 2003; Shankar 2008; Huang 2013), but occurs in various parts of the English-speaking world: amongst Koreans in Toronto (Shin 2012), Iranians in Australia (McAuliffe 2008), Samoans in New Zealand (MacPherson 1999), and British Somalis (Pheonix 2011) and Indians (Clayton 2011; Qureshi et al. 2012). Despite their differing social and geographical locations, stereotypes of FOBs or freshies share the signification of difference along linguistic, cultural and often economic lines (cf. McAuliffe 2008). They are commonly held to lack fluency in the language of the country of settlement, or to speak in a 'funny accent' (McAuliffe 2008), and lack awareness of locally acceptable dress or behaviour (sometimes extending to the attribution of anti-social behaviour such as rowdiness

or excessive drinking; MacPherson 1999; McAuliffe 2008). Ambiguous immigration status also plays a part in some constructions (Husband et al. 2014); hence British Punjabi Sikhs, for example, 'tend to look down on them because of their perceived provinciality, lack of local know-how, poor language skills, inappropriate clothing, useless qualifications, and presumed illegality' (Qureshi et al. 2012).

As perceived social characteristics, rather than simply migration status, are key to this categorization (Shankar 2008, 68), it may also be metaphorically extended to apply to non-migrants. Second Generation Vietnamese and Korean Americans reportedly also use 'FOB' as a term of abuse for each other, connoting

any of several ethnic identifiers such as accented English, speaking Korean or Vietnamese with peers, engaging in behaviour and leisure pursuits associated with newer arrivals or ethnic traditionalists, dressing in styles associated with the homeland or ethnic enclaves, or socializing with recently immigrated co-ethnics or ethnic traditionalists. (Pyke and Dang 2003, 156)

Even the insult 'whitewashed' (acting too 'white', forgetting one's ethnic 'roots') is reportedly preferable to 'FOB' amongst Pyke and Dang's participants. Similarly, young British Pakistanis may find themselves accused of being a 'coconut' or a 'TP' (Typical Pakistani) depending on whether they are perceived as acting in insufficiently or overly 'ethnic' ways.

Within a national (rather than transnational) framework, these practices have been variously interpreted as the deflection of stigma onto new migrants in a context of internalized racism (e.g. Pyke and Dang 2003); as attempts to negotiate hierarchies of belonging in multicultural settings (as when young British Somali women stress their Britishness and 'cool' through contrasts with recent migrants, see Pheonix 2011); and as a 'foil' against which commitments to Britishness can be defined and displayed (Qureshi et al. 2012). Some studies add a transnational perspective, pointing to continuities with class antagonisms in countries of origin (McAuliffe 2008), or the ambivalent evaluations of 'here' and 'there' in transnational social fields, so that disparaging recent migrants asserts the value of British or diasporic culture over that of the ancestral 'homeland' (Qureshi et al. 2012).

Alongside similarities in these processes of boundary-making, however, differences emerge in the content of 'Fresh off the Boat' stereotypes, corresponding to variation in the context of migration. Dynamic political and economic environments in both 'sending' and 'receiving' regions are crucial for understanding the trajectories of migrants, and also, therefore, of the stereotypical representations of these populations. Thus, distinctions exist between post-war Polish migrants who arrived as political exiles and saw themselves as guardians of authentic Polishness, and economic migrants arriving after the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004, often viewed negatively by the

former (Husband et al. 2014). Iranian migrants to Australia following the revolution of 1978–79 were largely middle/upper class urbanites, who aspired to regain social status through conspicuous consumption. Their children then seek to distance themselves from lower class ‘freshies’ who do not display valued styles (McAuliffe 2008). Global reconfigurations of economic power, however, mean that upper class metropolitan Indian migrants can be perceived as desirably cosmopolitan by the ‘Desi teens’ of Silicone valley studied by Shankar (2008), whilst the ascendancy of Korean pop-culture further assists Korean migrant students in Toronto in resisting definition as marginal FOBs. In this latter case, it is the new migrants who indulge in conspicuous consumption to demonstrate their wealth and ‘cool’ cultural capital (Shin 2012). These differing migration settings illustrate how the same boundary drawn against new migrants takes on differing content and meaning. It is important, therefore, to situate recent migration from Pakistan in its historical, political, social and economic context.

Migration histories and anti-immigration discourse

The history of male post-war migration from Pakistan to the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, followed by family reunification in the 1970s, is well documented (Anwar 1979; Shaw 1988; Werbner 1990). As children reached adulthood, transnational marriages, often between members of extended families, became popular. By the year 2000, up to 10,000 Pakistanis entered Britain annually as spouses (Charsley 2013), including increasing numbers of husbands after the Primary Purpose Rule (requiring spousal visa applicants to demonstrate that immigration was not the main purpose of their marriage) was abolished in 1997. From around the same time, Pakistani immigration diversified, including large numbers of students, work permit holders, visitors and irregular migrants. Many post-war migrants had experienced an era of relatively stable factory work before bringing over wives and families, investing in property and starting their own businesses. New arrivals, on the other hand, often found work in South Asian-run enterprises (shops, catering), their low pay compounded by the need to repay the costs of tuition and/or migration. In an inflated housing market, many have rented accommodation from settled Asian families (Ahmad 2008).

As Ahmad observes, therefore, a power discrepancy exists between the old migrant family and new migrant individuals, ‘reflected above all in capital assets such as property and business’ (2008, 167). Given their often insecure immigration status, new migrants could not necessarily look forward to becoming heads of households in Britain (Ahmad 2008), whilst those arriving as husbands of British Pakistani women may find themselves (at least initially – Chopra 2009) in subordinate positions in domestic relations of power (Charsley 2005), so ‘today’s *mangetars* cannot impose the regimes of

patriarchal dominance that [first generation migrant men] did when they imported young brides in the 1970s' (Ahmad 2008, 165–166).

Recent migrants also enter Britain at a time when discourse on immigration is increasingly negative. Migrant and minority populations are of course not immune to anti-immigrant sentiment. Forty-nine per cent of foreign-born respondents in the 2009–10 Citizenship Survey, for example, favoured reducing immigration (Binder 2012). As Espenshade and Belanger argue of the US context, 'ever since the founding of the new colonies there have been persistent efforts by former immigrants to keep out newcomers' (1997, 227). In our current fieldwork, we have often heard negative views expressed about Eastern European immigrants, ranging from accusations of laziness and benefit scrounging to theft.⁵

This context influences both the categorization of recent subcontinental migrants as 'other' and the content of representations of this category. Contemporary British politics of (anti)immigration play a significant role in some humorous portrayals of freshies. In 'Freshy and Brother' (Episode 1 – the arrival)⁶ – when 'Freshy' arrives to visit his British cousin ('Brother'), he opens his suitcase to reveal, alongside a range of inappropriate gifts for family, a young irregular immigrant whom he has smuggled into the country. Rizwan's Freshie arrives in the UK on a student visa, but is then seen working in a variety of 'Asian' ethnic labour market settings (curry house, sweet shop, corner shop) – echoing media coverage of apparent abuses of student visa routes by applicants from the Indian subcontinent.⁷ Elsewhere, the increasing emphasis on 'sham' marriage in government and media discourse (Charsley and Benson 2012) is echoed in Arshad's comedy rap 'You are Freshy',⁸ in which the central character 'swam to this country in 2001, made a white friend and tried to marry his Mum' before later being deported after foolishly admitting to the authorities that his marriage to a Polish woman was a 'sham'. Arshad's 'Badman' character also illustrates how to 'upset a freshie' by tantalizing them with a red British passport: 'You want? You want? You can have ... No! Not for you!' In all of these portrayals, the freshie figure is male, reflecting not just patterns of immigration, but mainstream discourse focusing on the undesirability of or threat posed by migrant men (Charsley and Wray 2015).

When it comes to motivations for intra-ethnic boundary-making, however, viewing the freshie figure as merely part of an attempt to 'pull up the draw-bridge' (as it has become known colloquially) to deny others access to gains from migration would be an insufficient and reductive interpretation. Rather, the contrast with the freshie's supposed dubious immigration status emphasizes British Pakistanis' own unambiguous entitlement to British citizenship. Amid the heightened problematization of British Muslim identities in the wake of 9/11 and the 2001 riots, and with British national identity increasingly marked as white, British Pakistanis place increasing emphasis on citizenship as

a form of identity and belonging (Hussain and Bagguley 2005). Like British Somalis distancing themselves from new East African migrants (Pheonix 2011), the figure of the freshie amongst British Pakistanis can thus be read as an attempt at gaining relative status in hierarchies of belonging.

Racism, stigma and 'ethnic cleansing'

The figure of the freshie carries strong echoes of the forms of cultural racism to which earlier migrants to Britain and their children were subjected. Whilst 'funny accents' have long been used to ridicule immigrants from South Asia, British Pakistanis mocking 'freshies' add linguistic specificity to the parody, such as the word *yaar* ('mate', used like the colloquial 'bro') which appears both in 'Being a Freshie's Cool' and as one of Arshad's markers of a freshie. With 'curry' firmly now part of British cuisine, the expression of racist or anti-immigrant sentiment through comments on cooking smells or personal odour has abated, but reappears in the description of Arshad's Freshie: 'pee smells like *methi*' (fenugreek, herb used in Pakistani cooking).

Following post-colonial theory, we can view this reproduction of stigma as signalling an internalization of colonial racial/ethnic hierarchies. Hence Zubaida (cited in Brah 1996, 20) describes how in the 1970s, an 'accumulation of colonial experience' affected beliefs and stereotypes deployed by the majority population in their interaction with migrants. In turn, Bolognani (2014) has argued that this accumulation has now imbued the cognitive structures of British Pakistanis who project connotations of backwardness onto a 'recognizable other', and by doing so emerge as holders of a better culture, fighting off the threat of an internal post-colonial inferiority complex. Less psychological versions of this interpretation suggest a form of distancing or 'ethnic cleansing' which rather than contesting 'ethnic stigma', attempt to displace it onto what might appear externally as a subsection of the group, but which is constructed as separate (Morosanu and Fox 2013). Or, as Wimmer puts it, 'subdividing a group into new categories in order to dis-identify oneself from the original, encompassing group', and pass the stigma down the resulting ethnic hierarchy (2008, 1036–1037). Thus, settled Poles in Bradford may stress the difference between themselves and 'yobbish' new Polish migrants; and some Samoans in Fiji, 'distance themselves publicly from young, stupid FOBS ... who are "giving us good Samoans" a bad reputation' (MacPherson 1999, 56). For Pyke and Dang (2003), the derogatory dyad of 'FOB' and 'whitewashed' both denote internalized racism in that the former denigrates those seen as being 'too ethnic', whereas the latter ridicules those blind to the impossibility of acceptance into the ethnic majority, thus marking out and policing an acceptable 'normal': the 'bicultural middle' (Pyke and Dang 2003). 'Being FOBby' as Shalini Shankar puts it, 'is always relative' (2008, 70).

This boundary-making can have multiple audiences, and displace stigma with multiple sources. Thus, new migrants from Korea must defend themselves against characterization as ‘Nerds’ by majority Canadians, and as FOBs by Canadian Koreans (Shin 2012). In the British Pakistani case, we argue, although obviously influenced by external racism and cultural forms, the freshie stereotype is also directed at audiences within the British Pakistani population, but that this population must be understood in a transnational context.

Transnational contexts and blurred boundaries

Continuities of divisions such as class may exist within a transnational social field (McAuliffe 2008). Equally, however, transnationalism may be a source of ambiguity (cf. Qureshi et al. 2012) in which networks and lived experiences undermine easy categorical distinctions. Opportunities to visit ancestral homelands, for example, may challenge diasporic self-conceptualizations (Huang 2013; Husband et al. 2014).

The last decade has seen a shift from a predominantly ‘ethnic minorities’ approach in the study of British Pakistanis, to increasing recognition of the importance of dynamic transnational contexts (e.g. Charsley 2013; Bolognani 2014). Bolognani (2014) suggests that British Mirpuris’ relationship with Mirpur (in Pakistani Kashmir) has shifted from emotional attachment embedded in kin networks and practices, to one in which ‘back home’ is seen as offering the potential for exploitation for social or economic gain. On visits, even those with modest circumstances may be able to afford a lavish lifestyle marked by conspicuous consumption (e.g. renting expensive cars), often staying at luxurious properties built over the years with family remittances. Many such visitors report negative views of locals – as dishonest, practising ‘culture’ or tradition rather than the forms of Islam favoured by young British Pakistanis (Bolognani 2014), and in many other ways ‘backwards’ – a English term commonly used in South Asia to connote lack of economic and/or social development or excessive traditionalism. Pakistan is commonly referred to as ‘back home’ by generations raised in Britain, but rather than understanding this as connoting emotional attachment (stress on ‘home’), we suggest it is increasingly also significant that Pakistan is represented as ‘back’ – behind or ‘backwards’ in relation to Britain.

Attention to this transnational context also sheds light on an initially confusing sub-genre of freshie videos, in which individuals in Pakistan are held up for ridicule. The prime example of this are clips of ‘Freshies Swearing’⁹ where an individual is seen saying English swear words or insulting phrases – the apparent intention being to mock their accents or gullibility. If freshies are ‘Fresh off the Boat’, then why are non-migrants in Pakistan included in this category? Why does the migrant in Rizwan’s song sing that his ‘Mum and Dad are

Freshie too? The answer to this conundrum, we suggest, lies in viewing the freshie figure as part of the identity and boundary work of British Pakistanis both within families and communities in Britain, and with regard to their relationships with Pakistan.

Most British Pakistani families retain extensive kinship networks in Pakistan. Individuals and families vary in the extent to which they operationalize these 'latent' networks through travel, business or marriage (at all, or at different phases of the life-course, Charsley 2013). Added to this is the character of migration from Pakistan to Britain. Whilst migration patterns in some other groups may be characterized as separate 'waves', so that Zhou and Xiong interpret American Chinese use of 'FOB' as part of a confrontation with 'renewed images of Asians as foreigners' (2005, 1049), the British Pakistani population has been characterized by longstanding patterns of transnational marriage. Recent migrants may therefore be closer than polarizing representations suggest. Even when not arriving through marriage, migrants often have family connections to Britain – the freshie in Humza Arshad's sketches is Badman's Uncle, whilst 'Freshy and Brother' are cousins. Considerable numbers of British Pakistanis, moreover, spend some of their upbringing in Pakistan – sent 'back' for (often overlapping) reasons including education, Islamic training or to correct behaviours considered undesirable by their parents (e.g. the 'marriage cure' or drug rehabilitation – Bolognani 2014). And of course, their own parents or grandparents arrived in Britain as migrants – one joke (presumably by a Pakistani reacting to this discrimination) on Dadyal Online Facebook site ran: 'British to Freshie: "You Freshie why not you go home" Freshie to British: "You mum you dad Freshie why not they go home."' The joke was not well received, with respondents denying that their parents could be 'fresh' as they had not recently migrated.¹⁰ This generational dynamic was, however, echoed during our recent research when one woman interviewee reported that her children have started calling their Pakistan-born father 'Freshie'. In stressing the difference between themselves and 'freshies', British Pakistanis are attempting to define a boundary in the context of a much more fluid and unclear local, transnational and generational social divisions.

Being a freshie is (not) cool: migration and cultural capital

In this section, we seek to shift our attention from the *fact* of this boundary-making, to the representations encoded in its *form*, in a closer examination of the characterization of the figure of the freshie. The most obvious feature is their lack of 'cool'.¹¹ They are portrayed both as lacking the 'dominant' cultural capital which might have exchange value in, for example, the labour market (confining their prospects to low-paid and low-status work in the ethnic economy) but they also lack the types of cultural capital which have been

described as 'non-dominant': the tastes and preferences which would gain them cultural status amongst (relatively young) British Pakistanis (Carter 2003).

As migration separates the migrant from the social field in which their capital is generated, it has the potential to affect all three of Bourdieu's (1986) forms of cultural capital – institutional, embodied and objectified. The former is frequently devalued in migration – most obviously in the lack of recognition of educational qualifications – but representations of freshies speak powerfully to the loss or devaluation of embodied and objectified forms of cultural capital. Most obvious are the ways in which aesthetic tastes (e.g. the 'red and gold tissue box') and bodily practices (e.g. showering with a bucket) are derided.

Some cultural behaviours ridiculed are merely those seen as direct transfers from Pakistan – wearing sandals in winter (or with socks), particular hair styles (oiled or brylcreemed), or eating paratha for breakfast. Erel (2010) has recently argued that 'rucksack' approaches viewing migrants as bringing cultural capital which may or may not 'fit' in the receiving context ignore the potential agency of migrants in developing new forms of cultural capital, and the differentiated ways and degrees to which migrants can negotiate recognition or exchange of existing cultural capital. Writing of Iranians in Australia, however, McAuliffe observes that

[n]ewer migrants were not accorded the agency to select their own clothing styles, but were rather placed within a class hierarchy by the more established Iranian community members where their (lack of) economic mobility was signified through the apparent limitations to cheaper 'low class' clothing. (2008, 71)

In the British Pakistani freshie figure, the relevant signifier is not so much cheapness as the Pakistani-ness, or more exactly the un-'cool' ness (to British Pakistani eyes), of the clothing. Socio-economic variation between migrants is recognized but reduced to variations of aesthetic incompetence – so in Arshad's 'How to spot a Freshie', where freshies wear 'socks with flip flops', an 'upper class freshie' wears Reebok Classic trainers.¹²

The freshie may be portrayed as trying to adopt local styles and behaviours, but these are uniformly depicted as unsuccessful. Swapping his silk *kurta* for local clothing styles – ridiculed as 'chav'-like – does nothing to improve social status. Here the stereotype converges with that of the 'chav', an insult constructing class-others as failed consumers who, even were they to have the financial means, are excluded from social recognition by their failure to comply with dominant (in this case middle-class) tastes (cf. Tyler and Bennett 2010). Attempts to emulate Jamaican-influenced British street-style and speech (Rastaman, bloodclot) are similarly ridiculed. If only the culturally dominant have the power to adopt a range of cultures for self-making (Skeggs 2005), and to use these appropriately according to setting (Erikson in Lamont

and Molnár 2002), then the implied difference in (multi-)cultural proprietorship between British Pakistanis and new migrants is clear.¹³

Intimate others? Sexuality, disgust and transnational marriage

Given their lack of street credibility, amongst other manifestations of the lack of validation or exchange value of their cultural capital (Erel 2010), freshies are depicted as sexual failures. Like the new Iranian migrants said to be overwhelmed by the freedoms offered in the Western context and unable to act with propriety (McAuliffe 2008), the freshie is held to be incapable of acting appropriately with members of the opposite sex – ‘a girl’s worst enemy is a Freshie’.¹⁴ Whilst the construction of immigrant sexuality as threatening to in-group women is once more a reflection of dominant discourses, there is more to the stereotype than simple threat. Their sexuality is sometimes represented as deviant (not only does Arshad’s Freshie have a ‘paedo smile’, but he sells his anal hair online to a ‘guy in Lahore’, and milks his own nipple, whilst in Rizwan’s song, the freshie is ‘perving on young girls on the bus’). In our fieldwork, we have frequently encountered the assertion that men from Pakistan frequent prostitutes, whilst in the 2004 film ‘Yasmin’, the migrant husband plays on sexualized stereotypes by referring to a goat as ‘my wife’. Suggestions of homosexuality appear when Arshad’s freshie is ‘always holding hands with my guy mates’ (common in Pakistan, whilst public physical contact between men and women is rare and frowned upon). Elsewhere, Badman’s list of freshie characteristics features the assertion: ‘a clean-shaven freshie? Gay’.

Attempts to chat up women are uniformly depicted as laughable and disastrous. In Ahmad’s (2009) moving account of Pakistani irregular migrants to Italy, lone male migrants’ desires are frustrated by working hours and ethnic segregation, their publically a-sexuality symbolized by the invisibility of their lower body behind the shop or take-away counter. In the figure of the freshie, on the other hand, their sexuality is prominently acknowledged but represented as unlikely to reach a successful outcome. Indeed, there is a sense that the very attempt to approach a woman is unacceptable, just as broader anti-immigrant discourse has decried migrants’ desires, as Ahmad puts it:

Baulking at the idea that migrants themselves have emotional and sexual lives and aspirations which extend beyond the productive sphere: that they dare rise above their station as workers and covet things ‘we’ regard as normal for ourselves such as home ownership, domestic fulfilment, (reproductive) family life and, by implication, love, sex and intimacy. (2009, 310)

Implicit in the depiction of freshie sexuality is an element of distaste or even disgust which becomes more explicit in bodily aspects of these

representations. Representations of freshie physical appearance and bodily habitus range from merely tasteless (oiled side partings) to open disgust. They pick noses, squeeze spots and mine earwax in public (Rizwan), are heard coughing up phlegm in the bathroom each morning and have one 'black contaminated toe' visible at Friday prayers (Arshad). Disgust often forms part of processes of cultural hegemony. As Bourdieu suggests, the internalization of norms or tastes is such that people feel 'disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ("sick-making") of the tastes of others' (1984, 56). In our recent research, for example, one British Pakistani woman was reportedly horrified when her migrant husband applied oil to their children's hair (one of the markers of 'freshie' practice).

These bodily practices are not only being presented as different and inferior, but also as fundamentally less civilized (Bourdieu 1984)¹⁵ and sometimes even animalistic (a form of 'animal remainder disgust', Rozin in Lupton 2015) – excessive body or facial hair is frequently included in these depictions. Freshies may also be described as *jungle* and *paindu* (respectively, 'inhabitant of the jungle' and 'village dweller'), terms which point to ideas of being uncouth and uncivilized. When stripped of negative affect (Skeggs 2005), the indigenous or rural may be valued as '*desi*' (Charsley 2013), but here the connotation is one of savagery, which leaves no room for the possibility of a *bon sauvage*, but rather points at a 'recognizable other' (Bhabha 2005, 226) with 'signs of bestiality and grotesquerie' (271). The *sauvage* is recognizable because he has a common origin, but is 'other' because he has not evolved. Certain aesthetic sensibilities or traditional ways of sipping tea or eating fruit may be met with the use of such terms even in Pakistan,¹⁶ but is there rooted in an urban versus rural contrast, bypassed in the UK by the British Pakistani/migrant and attendant binaries (traditional/modern, acceptable/disgusting) embodied in the figure of the freshie.

This 'moral disgust' – the attribution of 'wrongness' to a social group (Lupton 2015 – here recent migrants represented in the figure of the freshie) – draws not only on 'animal remainder disgust', but also, we argue, on elements of 'liminality disgust': 'that generated by the transgression or indistinctness of cultural boundaries' (Lupton 2015). In other words, whilst moral evaluation is a common feature of boundary-making (Lamont 1992), here the affective nature of the evaluation (disgust) also reflects the fragility of the boundary being drawn.

Depictions of new migrants as physically revolting and/or sexually incompetent are particularly striking in the context of the frequency of marriages between British Pakistanis and migrants from Pakistan. Not only does transnational marriage undermine easy 'generational' boundary-making, as even the British grandchildren of migrants from Pakistan may have a parent, spouse or sibling's spouse from Pakistan: around half of British Pakistanis are married to migrants (Dale 2008), but the frequency of transnational marriage also means

that Pakistani nationals (particularly cousins or other members of the *biraderi* kingroup) are often at least suggested as potential marriage partners. It is thus no coincidence that the term *mangetar* (fiancé) is often also used of new migrants (whether or not they arrive through marriage). This usage not only reflects the dominance of marriage as a migration route to Britain over recent decades, but also carries connotations of weakness in domestic power relations – the immigrant husband has developed a reputation for being under the thumb of their wife and in-laws (Charsley 2013). The *mangetar* shares the lack of capital of the *freshie*, but is also characterized by this lack of domestic gendered power. The very term fixes them as fiancés rather than husbands; as not-quite-adults given the importance of the mature householder status to South Asian masculinities (Osella, Osella, and Chopra 2004).

A genre of songs has recently developed in Pakistan which warn of or ridicule the position of ‘mangetar’ – the video for Imran Shaukat’s ‘Mangeteran di Mat Wat Gai’ (*Mangetars* have gone mad) shows a man despairing of a life working menial jobs, taking on domestic chores and turning over his earnings to his wife who returns only enough for two cigarettes, whilst in the lyrics wives fly their husbands like kites, and men forget their proud Pakistani heritage.¹⁷ *Mangetar* can traditionally be used to refer to a male or female betrothed, but in the negative sense above is, like ‘freshie’, predominantly used in relation to men. It is likely that the image of wives from Pakistan as traditional, docile and domestic, less likely to ‘go mad’ than men experiencing a reversal of traditional gender relations, provides a further grounding for the gendered nature of these images.

Returning to the theme of transnationalism and the lack of unequivocal distinction between Pakistani and British Pakistani identities and social fields: this lack of clarity in boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ may help explain the affect-laden nature of some of the representations. As Skeggs writes,

To feel disgust is to be fully physically conscious of being within the realm of uneasy categories ... in disgust people are just too close for comfort. Expressions of disgust enable one to repel because they rely on public acknowledgment, it provides collective reassurance that we are not alone in our judgement of the disgusting object, generating consensus and authorization for [our own] standards, maintaining the symbolic order. (2005, 970)

The figure of the *freshie*, therefore, not only maintains a symbolic order in which British Pakistanis are superior to those in and from Pakistan, but also reflects the uneasiness and instability of this distinction.

The fuzziness of these boundaries was clearly illustrated in an incident in our recent fieldwork. Asked to put us in touch with some male spousal migrants, one British Pakistani contact replied that his neighbour was a *mangetar*. It later transpired that his neighbour was not, in fact, a migrant husband.

To justify his earlier assumption, this gatekeeper explained that ‘he looked like one [a *mangetar*], because of his hair and the way he dresses’. To make up for this disappointment, a dinner was arranged with two other alleged *mangetars*. During the meal, it emerged that one of them had come to the UK as a child and then was sent to Pakistan as a teenager to avoid juvenile detention. His dress sense, haircut, accent and reputation as somebody with an eye for the ladies, made him a *mangetar* in the gatekeeper’s eyes. The other, who had arrived in the UK as a child, appeared to have been construed as a *mangetar* due to an apparent weakness in domestic power relations – his British born Pakistani wife was described as wearing the trousers in the marriage.

Conclusion

The term ‘freshie’, or other contractions of ‘Fresh off the Boat’, is commonly used in the Anglophone world by ethnic minorities referring to recent migrants from their ancestral countries of origin. Equivalent terms may exist in other socio-linguistic contexts, such as the French Maghrebian ‘blédard’ (Schiff, n.d.), or distinctions may exist without specific terminology (e.g. on Danish Turks – Charsley and Liversage 2015). Such intra-ethnic boundary-making has been interpreted as motivated by internalized racism, attempts to displace stigma and to negotiate hierarchies of belonging. A fuller appreciation of the significance of these stereotypical representations, however, relies on their contextualization within particular histories of migration, socio-economic contexts and transnational environments.

The elaboration of the figure of the freshie in British Pakistani comedy videos allows for a closer examination of the content of this particular manifestation. The analysis presented here reveals a figure mocked for lack of cultural capital, suspect in terms of immigration status, ridiculous in their efforts towards social acceptance, and exhibiting dubious sexuality and disgusting bodily practices. In each of these matters, from citizenship and belonging, to moral and sexual acceptability, the implied contrast with British Pakistanis is clear, but placing this figure in ethnographic context reveals the blurring of the boundaries on which this contrast relies.

Amid the demanding identity work necessitated by a complex situation of cultural change, ongoing migration, varying transnationalism and the possibility of cross-border marriage,¹⁸ the figure of the freshie offers a point of clarity, the possibility of distinguishing an ‘us’ from a ‘them’. These boundaries are, however, unstable. The not uncommon practice of young people spending some parts of their childhood and/or young adulthood in Pakistan and some in Britain poses challenges for classifications of individuals as unambiguously British/Pakistani. The ‘freshie’ may also be a *mangetar* – and whilst the ‘fiancé’ may be an outsider/incomer, as a husband and father it becomes harder to ignore the intertwining of his identity with a British Pakistani

household. Even the boundaries of British citizenship, increasingly important as a form of identity amongst the 'second generation' (Hussain and Bagguley 2005), are blurred by the entitlements conferred by marriage to a British citizen.¹⁹ In the face of this multi-layered categorical fuzziness and fluidity, distinctions of cultural capital and stereotypical representations of domestic power relations become more important than migrant status in assertions of cultural distance and boundary-making.

Whilst both authors have encountered British Pakistani women who view a potential inversion of traditional gendered relations of domestic power as an incentive for transnational marriage, the figure of the *freshie* – embarrassing, morally dubious, culturally 'other', sexually unacceptable and powerless at work as (if married) at home – may also be part of changing evaluations of the desirability of transnational marriage. The benefits and risks of 'marrying back home' have long been the subject of debate amongst British Pakistanis, but alongside increasing use of a discourse of 'forced marriage', and concerns that migrants may be merely 'marrying a passport' (Charsley 2013), the figure of the *freshie* may be a further indication of increasing critique of transnational marriages. Marriage is thus both a source of categorical blurring and a terrain on which these tensions between British/Pakistani, tradition/modernity/religion, citizen/migrant, and 'other'/co-ethnic or even relative are played out.

Not all migrants from Pakistan are, however, derided by all British Pakistanis as *freshies* or *mangetars*. Hence, British South Asian women may report that subcontinental husbands have problematically traditional views of gender roles, whilst stressing that their own migrant husbands are not like that (Dale 2008). The children in the example above may call their father 'Freshie', but others may not consider the label to apply to those with whom they have developed social or familial relations. Some also credit education or class status on the part of the migrant as allowing cultural-capital boundaries to be transcended (cf. Charsley 2013). Amid negative discussions of *freshies* on internet fora, British Pakistani voices objecting to negative representations of new migrants can also be found.²⁰ The existence of such stereotypes should therefore not be taken to imply unanimous opinions or widespread social cleavages.

Nevertheless, the figure of the *freshie* does not operate at merely a symbolic level, or with respect only to processes affecting the British Pakistanis who employ it. In her critique of Kristeva-inspired discussions of the 'abject', Tyler notes that we should not ignore 'what it means to be (made) abject, to be one who repeatedly finds herself the object of the other's violent objectifying disgust' (2013). The representations discussed here are comic, and some may be intended as ironic – Arshad's 'Badman' poking fun at his 'freshie' uncle is himself a comic stereotype, so here Arshad may be mocking British Pakistani stereotyping, rather than vilifying migrants themselves. Indeed Arshad's skits end with a 'message', such as the dangers of

judging people. Such humour is, however, inherently ambiguous, risking reproducing stereotypes (cf. Weaver 2010). Humour may be used by ethnic minorities to resist racism (Weaver 2010), but in the figure of the freshie, forms of racism experienced by earlier migrants appear to be repeated in their descendants' reaction to more recent migrants. Further research would be needed to explore the impact of these representations on recent migrants, but examples from our fieldwork suggest some do perceive hostility from British Pakistanis. Hence one pair of labour migrant men dismissed the possibility of friendships with British Pakistanis having learnt (they said) that they would be seen merely as 'bloody Pakis', and a migrant woman married to a British Pakistani cousin complained that her British relatives treated her as inferior (and again called her 'Paki'), whilst another complained that the only discrimination she had experienced since arriving in Britain had been from British Pakistanis.²¹

Finally, we note a recent tendency amongst scholars to employ the categories of 'freshie' (Qureshi et al. 2012) or '*mangetar*' (Ahmad 2008), alongside other gendered generational archetypes such as 'Babas'/'old timers' (male pioneer migrants) and 'Valdas'/'bhijis' (their wives) (Ahmad 2008; Qureshi et al. 2012), as shorthand for the patterning of positionalities amongst South Asian diaspora. Whilst these authors clearly recognize that these are cultural constructions rather than categories of analysis, and the project of revealing differing migration histories and their consequences is important, given the risks inherent in reproducing negative stereotypes, we would caution against such usage.

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Notes

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6WNfVuRGb4>.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVmmYMwFj1I> (accessed 15 February 2016).
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-29597991>, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/shortcuts/2012/jun/10/diary-of-a-badman> (accessed 13 January 2015).
4. Further examples identified by searching YouTube for 'freshie' and 'Pakistani freshie', eliminating material on other ethnic groups, and selecting those in which the stereotype was elaborated most clearly. Material relating to 'freshie' and '*mangetar*' stereotypes was extracted from the ESRC project's qualitative

- data, whilst both researchers' longstanding ethnographic research furnished contextual information.
5. Compare BBC 'Citizen Khan' Series 1: the eponymous character reads the Daily Mail and becomes enraged at Eastern European immigration.
 6. <https://www.youtube.com/user/FreshyandBrother/> (accessed 18 July 2014).
 7. International students are permitted only limited paid employment.
 8. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_q1GAirh4s (accessed 18 July 2014).
 9. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=defo0yA11sE> (accessed 13 January 2015).
 10. <https://www.facebook.com/dadyaal> (accessed 18 July 2014).
 11. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8fYPVoD7Hc> (accessed 13 January 2015).
 12. Sports shoes with *déclassé* connotations for some audiences.
 13. The impossibility of crossing this divide is illustrated by the desperate Punjabi geek in 'Freshie Prince' who invents an 'app' transforming him into cool 'HomeBoi' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8fYPVoD7Hc> – accessed 13 January 2015). British Asians' hybridized 'black' cultural appropriations were themselves initially mocked, for example, BBC 'Goodness Gracious Me' Bhangra Muffins: one suggests supporting their cultural motherland in the World Cup: '[but] India weren't there!' 'What India? – I'm talking about Jamaica!' (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEuJptyNhRg>, accessed 13 January 2015).
 14. Arshad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h33Zg6CVjg> (accessed 22 January 2015).
 15. Compare, 'Freshie WC' T-shirt design: <http://freshiewear.spreadshirt.co.uk/freshie-wc-A5398106> (accessed 13 January 2015).
 16. For example, 'Pindu Day' at Lahore University of Management Sciences: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/154164/spirited-celebration-paindoo-for-the-day/> (accessed 10 December 2014).
 17. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vkc354eqLG0> (accessed 13 January 2015).
 18. The impact of the 2012 spousal immigration restrictions will be interesting to assess.
 19. At least those which outlast the probationary period.
 20. For example, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/the-islamic-email-circle-wwwislam4evernet/are-you-a-freshy-what-is-a-freshyhe-is-just-off-the-boat-thinking-of-pakistan-145330472172433> or <http://www.dadyal.pk/2011/07/lost-are-we-forg-etting-our-past.html> (accessed 13 January 2015).
 21. Some may be more aware of negative attitudes from co-ethnics.

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